



jagnewsletter

For Environmental Clean-Up
of the Muggah Creek Watershed

JAG: Joint Action Group

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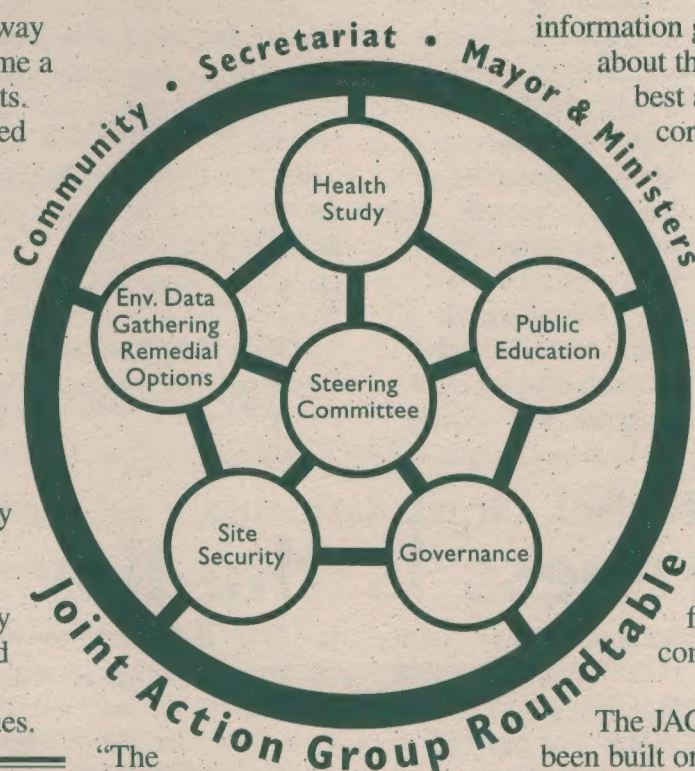
JAG's Mission

To educate, involve and empower the community through partnerships, to determine and implement acceptable solutions for Canada's worst hazardous waste site, and to assess and address the impact on human health.

From Across the Country JAG Model Getting Attention

Interest in JAG and the way it is structured has become a model for similar projects. Interest is being expressed by academics and other groups from across the country. "It's unique in Canada," reports Bucky Buchanan, Chairman. "It has been developed specifically to deal with the problems we are faced with here and has been guided by the philosophy of open, transparent, representative and inclusive participation by all in the community and among all levels of government," he continues.

"The communication and dedication of our volunteers is paramount. A lot of people put a lot of hours into this process. Without that nothing else would happen," asserts Dr. Buchanan.



information gathered about the site, the best and safest corrective actions can then be determined. "And for the future," he concludes, "we have to address any human health issues that may have resulted from the contamination."

"The volunteers are dealing with the past, present and future," adds Mike Britten, Program Coordinator. The first step is to determine what contaminants have been left on the site from the past. "This is a huge task and the time invested in thoroughly evaluating the site is necessary to determine exactly what we are dealing with so that we can go about dealing with it in the best and safest manner," comments Mr. Britten. For the present, with the

The JAG process has been built on input from all interested members of the community and is driven predominantly by volunteers. Anyone with a concern or information to share is given input into the process. It also involves a partnership among the three levels of government. "The process can be slow given its very nature," comments Dr. Buchanan, "but the approach is professional, scientific and nothing is left to question."

Busy and Successful Year Health Studies Working Group

The Health Studies Working Group has been working to forge relationships, make contacts and draw attention to the health concerns of our community. The cooperation of local, provincial and national partners has been a necessary component in the success achieved to date.

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Local concerns over the health issues facing Sydney residents from the possible impact of Muggah Creek, have been the driving force behind the HSWG. Volunteers have been instrumental in moving the process forward by active participation.

Volunteers who sit on the HSWG have worked toward a strategic plan for the coming year. Part of the plan included a review of currently available research. The HSWG employs Rod Beresford who is compiling and analyzing the studies already conducted on the tar ponds as well as

studies on the environment and other health issues. The results of this work will assist in setting the direction of the Health Studies Working Group. Copies are available through the Beaton Institute at UCCB.

Nationally, the Health Studies Working Group has been able to draw support from Health Canada which is currently conducting a Mortality Analysis. This study examines approximately one hundred diseases and compares

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incidence rates to provincial and national levels. The results will be available later this summer with the author of the study, Dr. Pierre Band of Montreal, visiting Sydney in May.

In a particularly impressive cooperative effort, the Province of Nova Scotia,

Statistics Canada and the Environmental Health Directorate are concentrating on the identification of health risks using relevant data bases and investigating disease rates by gender, age and geographic area.

"The Health Studies Working Group has had a successful year," said Gerard MacKinnon, the chair of the HSWG. "The progress made has been a result of the cooperation and support of the members of JAG, the other working groups and the partners in JAG." This has been shown clearly through the work done with Health Canada, the Department of Health, the Geography Division of Statistics Canada and with input from United States sources.

MacKinnon has a positive approach: "The work of the HSWG is far from finished but the projects undertaken this year have demonstrated that the process can work through the hard work and dedication of many community members."

How To Reach Us...

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Health Study Results

Researcher to Visit Sydney

Dr. Pierre Band, will be in Sydney during the week of May 21st to discuss progress on the Health Canada study. The study analyzes approximately one hundred diseases and compares mortality incidence rates to provincial and national levels.

Committees may request Dr. Band to speak to their community groups by contacting Germaine LeMoine to make arrangements.

563-5239

Human Health...As defined by the World Health Organization 1949:
A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not just the absence of disease and disability.

Bioremediation...A versatile process that accelerates the biological cleanup undertaken by naturally-occurring organisms in soil and water. Considered to be the fastest growing remediation technology.

Site Assessment...Step-wise process for collecting physical chemical and biological information on-site.

Risk Assessment...Modelling and assessment of how contaminants interact (in theory) with environmental (ecological or human) receptors. Results expressed as the risk of toxicological effects.

Environmental Assessment...Process for evaluating the environmental and social impacts of all aspects of a project before it proceeds.

Risk Management...Strategy to reduce the risk of toxicological effects without "cleaning up" the site to the normal environmental (chemical) criteria

Capturing Its Essence New Look for JAG

In the spirit of JAG's mandate for increased community participation and awareness, a call went out to the youth of Cape Breton for their creativity in the development of a new logo. The Public Education and Participation (PEP) Working Group organized a logo contest open to all school-aged children in the Industrial Cape Breton area.

The winner, from one hundred and fifty submissions, was Sheena MacDonald of Riverview Rural High School. Sheena MacDonald's design was given to Art Plus Advertising for further development.

The movement of the stream in the design represents the contamination moving to the green of new growth while the cattails rising from the pond and the "ying-yang" of the circle also represent new growth, restoration and

the need for balance. The circular shape of the logo represents a sense of unity, of community, of a whole.

"We are very pleased with the end result," comments Germaine LeMoine, JAG Public Information Officer. "It sums up the very essence of what JAG is attempting to accomplish."



EDGAR Working Group Pleased

Interceptor Sewer Project Approval

Approval of an \$8.7 million project that will eventually see household sewage bypass the tar ponds site is the most recent of JAG's accomplishments. This project will reduce the rate of the tar ponds' contaminants moving into the harbour.

The Environmental Data Gathering & Remedial Options Working Group (EDGAR) has been working since 1996 toward the research, lobbying and pre-design activities required to make this project a reality. "The acceptance by three levels of government partners was a significant accomplishment," says Frank Potter, EDGAR member.

"Our concept is to collect the present sewage in a system that steers it around

the contaminated site," Potter explains. Currently 3.5 million tonnes of raw sewage moves through the ponds daily. Re-routing this material around the tar ponds is no small task. Odours and

through the site.

To date, other EDGAR activities have included the initiation of a leachate study of the Municipal landfill site and a Coke Ovens site analysis.

Eric Leukert, EDGAR Chairman, feels that the new sewer collector system is a significant accomplishment and adds, "One of the committee's goals is to work toward the development of the most stringent remediation standards available. The work will continue."

This project will reduce the rate of the tar ponds' contaminants moving into the harbour.

gases are in plain view and have raised serious health concerns among residents and workers in and around the tar ponds. More importantly, it will reduce the sewage flow that currently collects contaminants as it flows

Phase One Under Way Perimeter's Secure at Site Security

Phase One of demolition began in early April on nine out of nineteen structures that have been classified as non-hazardous. Buildings being removed include the sulfur pile and building, coke pile, coal pile, steam pipe line, coal transfer building, water standpipe, three rail trestles, and the eastern rail trestle. Phase One should be complete by the end of May.

"Phase Two is a much more complex and costly project," says Mark Ferris, Chair of the Site Security Working Group. Contributing to the difficulty of this phase are structures containing contaminants requiring special procedures for their safe removal. These include the Tar Cell Lagoon and the Domtar Tank. Ferris continues: "We also have to decide what we will do with the contaminants and we need people in the community to participate and be part of the decision. Two large

smoke stacks will also be tested and once we know what's inside, we can develop a plan for their removal too."

There is still a great deal of testing and planning before Phase Two demolition can begin, but the Site Security Working Group is hopeful that it could start as soon as July or August, if everything falls in place.

Prior to the start of this project, the Coke Ovens Site demolition area had been completely enclosed by fencing and security was added to make sure no one could get near the site during the clean-up process. "Our working group is looking at fencing other areas of the site as well, but that will also depend on what the community feels is best," concludes Ferris.



Posted signs warn of the extreme health risk due to contaminants.

PEP's Initiatives Target Residents Awareness is the Key

The Public Awareness & Participation Working Group (PEP) recognizes that public awareness is the first step towards public safety. One of PEP's main objectives is to provide factual information to area residents so they can make informed decisions. PEP's activities are aimed at creating awareness and putting mechanisms in place for community response.

Two of their recent projects focused on community awareness. One was the sponsoring of a logo design contest within Cape Breton schools. JAG recognized the need for a logo and decided a contest would achieve this goal as well as encourage youth involvement. Participation was very positive with PEP receiving an enthusiastic response. The winning entrant then partnered with a local graphic designer to complete the logo.

It will be unveiled at the Open House on April 25, 1998. Several other participants received t-shirts bearing their submitted logo design. Congratulations to all entrants!

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The second initiative was the formation of a Concerned Youth Coalition spearheaded by two of PEP's youth members: Brian MacKinnon and Terry MacDonald. They, along with other youth representatives, visited residents near the Tar Pond site to speak with them about the current demolition work at the site. They also visited area elementary schools to increase children's awareness of the hazards of

the site as well as the demolition work. What is planned by PEP for the upcoming months? Here are a few projects they strongly support:

- Video Production specifically focusing on site hazards
- Newsletter Publication
- Member Recruitment
- Site Photography to document the clean up progression
- Open House on April 25, 1998

David Ash, recently elected Chair of PEP, recognizes that much has been accomplished but says, "There is still a lot of work to be done. We welcome public participation and encourage any interested persons to get involved." With this in mind, any community groups or organizations can arrange an awareness session offered by the PEP committee by contacting Germaine LeMoine at 563-5239.